

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 08383 081600Z

63

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 ACDA-10

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R 081508Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 842

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

USIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 8383

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: DECEMBER 8 SYRIAN PRESS CONDEMNS PROPAGANDA OVER-
REACTION TO TRIPOLI CLASHES

1. MEDIA CARRIED MINIMAL REPORTING ON LEBANON. PRESS CITED
BEIRUT RADIO BROADCAST THAT BEIRUT PORT WILL OPEN DEC. 15
TO RECEIVE CARGO AND PASSENGER SHIPS.

2. AL-BAATH COLUMNIST EXPRESSED REGRET OVER HANDLING BY
ARAB INFORMATION MEDIA, PRINCIPALLY CAIRO'S VOICE OF
PALESTINE, OF TRIPOLI NAHR AL-BARED REFUGEE CAMP INCIDENT
DEC. 16. ACCORDING TO COLUMNIST, INCIDENT CONTAINED BY
PALESTINE LEADERS WHO EXERCISED CARE LEST FIGHTING SPREAD.
ARAB MEDIA THEN RAISED TENSIONS, HOWEVER, BY CAMPAIGN OF
SPECULATION DESPITE PREVIOUS SYRIAN ADVICE THAT MEDIA
SHIFT THEIR ATTENTION TO MATTERS OTHER THAN LEBANON.
HE CHARGED THAT IRRESPONSIBLE MEDIA COMMENTARY HAD
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 08383 081600Z

POURED OIL ON FIRE IN COUNTRY WHERE EMOTIONS STILL

RUNNING HIGH AND "NUMBER OF LIGHT, MEDIUM AND HEAVY
WEAPONS NOT LESS THAN HALF-MILLION." HE INSTEAD
URGED ARAB COMMENTATORS TO "EXTINGUISH WITH THEIR RESPONSI-
BLE PENS THE INDIVIDUAL FLAMES THAT BURN FROM TIME TO
TIME."

3. COMMENT: RECENT DECLINE IN MEDIA CONCENTRATION ON
LEBANON MAY REFLECT MORE THAN FOCUS ON ASAD TRIP TO JORDAN
AND DEVELOPMENTS ON OTHER FRONTS. AS COLUMNIST SUGGESTED,
LEBANESE SITUATION STILL HIGHLY INFLAMMABLE AND MAY BENEFIT
FROM LESS INTENSE PRESS FOCUS ON CONTINUING FACTIONAL
DIFFERENCES.
MURPHY

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